

March 2020

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Information Packet for Comment:

2020 Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread Project

Project is located on the Washburn Ranger District (Bayfield
County, Wisconsin) of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest

In cooperation with:

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer
Protection (WI-DATCP)

For Information Contact: Jennifer Maziasz

P.O. Box 578; Washburn, WI 54891

(715) 373-2667, Ext.5235 (voice)

jennifer.maziasz@usda.gov

Legal Description

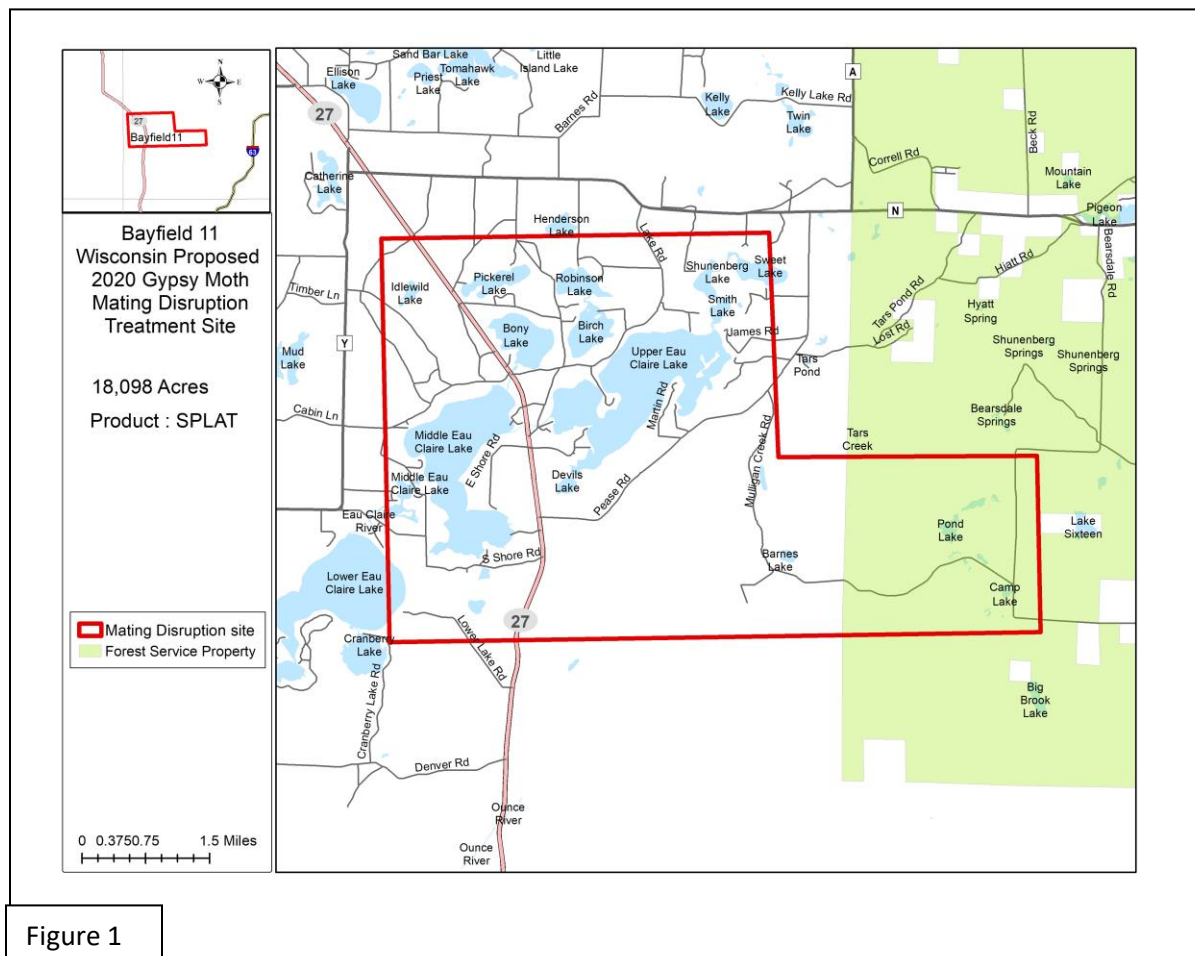
The project area is located near the Town of Drummond in Bayfield County Wisconsin; Township 44 North, Range 8 West and covers portions of Sections 16-21 as well as portions of 28-30 (See Figure 1).

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I. Introduction

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (the Forest) proposes taking action to slow the spread of gypsy moth infestations on the Washburn Ranger District, specifically on a 3,065-acre area in southwest Bayfield County (see Figure 1). Action would be implemented in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. This action is in response to annual moth surveys and moth population modeling that indicates management action is appropriate under conditions identified in the USDA Gypsy Moth Management in the United States FEIS and Record of Decision (January 1996). An Environmental Assessment is being completed by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and this project will be tiered to that assessment.

The purpose of this information package is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal, and to solicit public comments during the scoping period on the proposal. This document is not the completed environmental analysis. It is created to seek input from interested parties to aid in designing the project and associated environmental analysis. This proposal, along with the Legal Notice published in The Daily Press, serve as notice of the 30-day notice and comment period for this proposal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.5. The Legal Notice will appear on or about the date of this mailing. This is the only opportunity to comment before the decision on this project.



II. Purpose and Need for Action

Background: Gypsy moth (*Lymantria dispar*) is an exotic pest of forest trees that was accidentally introduced into the eastern United States in the late 1860's. Since then, it has steadily expanded south and westward, and is now established on more than one-third of potentially suitable habitat in the U.S. Ongoing detection efforts have identified that gypsy moth now occurs in low densities on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. This area lies in a "transition zone". This transition zone is an area where moth population densities make a "slow the spread" (STS) strategy effective.

Gypsy moth caterpillars feed on a wide variety of trees and shrubs. In the Great Lakes region, they prefer oak, aspen, paper birch, basswood and willow. High numbers of gypsy moth caterpillars defoliate trees and reduce tree growth and health. Additionally, human exposure to caterpillars may result in skin, respiratory and eye irritation.

Following large and/or persistent outbreaks, tree mortality may occur. In addition to human and forest health concerns, large numbers of caterpillars interfere in the enjoyment of outdoor activities such as hiking and camping. Aesthetic damage to property frequently occurs.

Gypsy moth STS programs are, and have been occurring annually on state, county and private forests in Wisconsin. It is important and necessary the Forest cooperates in these programs to insure National Forest lands do not unduly contribute to a rapid spread and establishment of gypsy moth within the state of Wisconsin. Comprehensive monitoring since 2000 has demonstrated the STS program can reduce the spread of gypsy moth by greater than 60% over no controls. A detailed description of the STS program is available at: https://www.gmsts.org/fdocs/STS_Brochure.pdf.

Direction:

The following 2004 Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (FP) goal and objective statements support the proposal:

Goal 1: "Ensure Healthy and Sustainable Ecosystems" (FP page 1-2).

- **Goal 1.4:** "Provide terrestrial ecosystems in healthy, diverse and productive conditions that support the diversity of plant and animal communities and tree species..." (FP page 1-3).
 - **Objective 1.4g:** "Annually treat non-roadside and roadside NNIS (non-native invasive species) acres." (FP page 1-3).

The Forest Plan specifically tiers to the USDA Gypsy Moth Management in the United States FEIS and Record of Decision (FP page 2-26), and the proposed action tiers to this direction, as well as the Environmental Assessment being completed in spring of 2020 by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

III. Proposed Action ---

The Forest proposes an aerial application of a gypsy moth mating disruptant (known as pheromones) in June or July 2020. The decision will be limited to those areas of Forest Service ownership. The analysis and decision of treatment on areas outside of Forest Service ownership will be conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. The objective of the treatment is to saturate the area with enough pheromone to confuse male moths and prevent them from finding and mating with female moths. There is one proposed treatment area in the southeast corner of the district in Bayfield County totaling 3,065 acres of Forest Service ownership.

IV. Preliminary Concerns ---

Based on the knowledge of Forest Service specialists and on public comments during previous analyses, we have identified several preliminary concerns associated with the proposal. Following is a brief description:

- Effectiveness of Proposed and Possible Alternative Treatments: The Forest Service as well as the public wants assurance that the treatments are worthwhile. As mentioned under “Purpose and Need for Action”, monitoring has shown that the treatments do in fact slow the spread of the gypsy moth. It is important to understand that the treatments are not expected to eradicate the moth or constitute an ultimate solution to the problem. Rather, they are designed to slow the spread of the moth, thus reducing the damage and providing additional time for research to discover effective eradication measures.
- Effects on Other Moths and Butterflies: The proposed treatment is gypsy moth mating disruption (pheromone). This pheromone treatment only affects the male gypsy moth. Other species are not impacted (see Attachment 1).
- Notification of application date to local forest users and residents: Local residents may be surprised if uninformed of control activities. Past notification efforts have been very successful and no complaints have surfaced from past treatments on the forest. The proposal would address this concern by using frequent, local radio, mailings and internet notices prior to activities.

V. Decision Framework and Responsible Official ---

The scope of the decision will be limited to National Forest lands on the Washburn Ranger District with known infestations by gypsy moth. The decision to be made will be limited to:

- Whether action will be taken to slow the spread of gypsy moth.
- Where these actions will occur.
- What mitigation measures will be required to reduce potential adverse impacts.

The Forest Service official responsible for this decision is the Washburn District Ranger.

VI. Comments on the Proposal

Comments in response to this proposal should focus on 1) the proposal; 2) issues or impacts from the proposal; and 3) possible alternatives for addressing issues associated with the proposal. We are especially interested in information that might identify a specific undesired result of implementing the proposed actions.

The purpose of this comment period is to provide an opportunity for the public to provide early and meaningful participation on a proposed action prior to a decision being made by the Responsible Official. Those who provide comments during the comment period are eligible to object the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 218 regulations.

A legal notice for the comment period is expected to be published in **The Daily Press**, of Ashland, Wisconsin, during the week of March 9th, 2020. The opportunity to provide comments to establish eligibility to object under 36 CFR 218 ends 30 days following the date of publication. Written, hand-delivered, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted. The publication date of the legal notice in **The Daily Press** is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period.

In order to be considered when making the final decision, comments should be submitted to Trevor Hahka, District Ranger, 113 Bayfield Street East, P.O. Box 578, Washburn, WI 54891; facsimile (715) 373-2878; or email: comments-eastern-chequamegon-nicolet-washburn@fs.fed.us (please put "Comments on 2020 Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread Project" in the subject line). Office hours, for those who wish to hand deliver comments, are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Central Time, Monday through Friday (except Federal holidays). Acceptable formats for electronic comments are text or html e-mail, Adobe portable document format, and formats viewable in Microsoft Office applications. It is the responsibility of the sender to ensure timely receipt of any comments submitted.

VII. Timeframe and Process

The Environmental Assessment for this project is planned to be completed by May 2020 by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. The interdisciplinary team will review the draft environmental assessment and provide input on the proposed action. The deciding official will consider their input and your comments before making a decision on the proposed action. If you would like more information or have questions on the project throughout the next several months, please contact Jennifer Maziasz at (715) 373-2667, extension 5235 or by email at jennifer.maziasz@usda.gov.

ATTACHMENT 1

Wisconsin
Cooperative
Gypsy Moth
Program

**fast
facts**



**TREATMENT:
PHEROMONE-BASED PRODUCTS**

Type of products	Two pheromone-based mating disruptors are used in Wisconsin: (1) pheromone flakes, tiny pieces of plastic treated with the female gypsy moth pheromone; and (2) SPLAT, small waxy droplets infused with female gypsy moth pheromone. Both synthetic and organic formulations of SPLAT are used.
How pheromone products work	When an area is treated with either flakes or SPLAT, the scent of the female moth floods the area and confuses male gypsy moths so they cannot find females. Because the gypsy moths are at the end of their life cycle, they die without reproducing. Neither product actually kills moths; they just carry the scent and prevent reproduction.
What pheromone flakes look like	They are flat, green, flake-like pieces of plastic baited with synthetic female moth pheromone, the scent that attracts male moths. The flakes are very small—about 1/8 inch by 1/16 inch—about the size of a grain of rice. About 1/4 to a 1/2 cup of flakes per acre is applied, which is equivalent to one or two flakes per square foot of leaf canopy.
What SPLAT looks like	SPLAT is a relatively new product that serves as an alternative delivery system for female gypsy moth pheromone. It involves aerial application of small, waxy droplets that have been infused with the pheromone and dropped into the forest canopy. About seven ounces of the product are used per acre. Like the plastic flakes, the wax will break down over time.
Application timing	One application between late June and late July, just before moths emerge from cocoons. Applications start in southern Wisconsin.
Application method	Both pheromone-based products are applied by airplane. Flakes are mixed with an adhesive material, similar to white school glue, so they stick to tree leaves. For SPLAT, the pheromone is mixed with a waxy matrix which sticks to the leaves.
Why we use pheromone products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pheromone is detectable only to gypsy moths; no other species are impacted. • Used where endangered or threatened species of butterflies and moths are feeding during spray season. • Both products are only effective in areas with low gypsy moth populations.
Spraying program information	Spray program information, including maps of the proposed spray sites, is available online at www.gypsymoth.wi.gov . Information is also available by calling 1-800-642-MOTH or by emailing gypsymoth@wisconsin.gov .

**For more information, call 1-800-642-MOTH
or visit Wisconsin Gypsy Moth on the Web at <http://gypsymoth.wi.gov>**